

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

## Tests Show Coliform Bacteria in Chatham Water

The Chatham Water Distribution System recently detected the presence of coliform bacteria in the water which is a violation of a drinking water standard. Although this is not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation.

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. We took 63 samples for coliform bacteria in September. Eleven of those samples showed the presence of coliform bacteria. The standard is that no more than 5% of the samples per month may have coliform bacteria present and we exceeded that standard.

### What should I do?

- **You do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions.** However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.
- People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1 (800) 426-4791.

### What does this mean?

**This is not an emergency.** If it had been you would have been notified immediately. Total coliform bacteria are generally not harmful themselves. *Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially-harmful, bacteria may be present. Coliforms were found in more samples than allowed and this was a warning of potential problems.*

Usually, coliforms are a sign that there could be a problem with the treatment or distribution system (pipes). Whenever we detect coliform bacteria in any sample, we do follow-up testing to see if other bacteria of greater concern, such as fecal coliform or *E. coli*, are present. **We did not find any of these bacteria in our subsequent testing.** If we had, we would have notified you immediately.

### What happened? What is being done?

- The second round of bacteria testing on September 14, 2009 had 5 sites test positive for total coliform. These sites were both storage tanks, Old Harbor Road, Cotchpinicut and Vineyard Ave. DEP was notified and we immediately began flushing the affected areas. Repeat sampling of these sites taken on September 15, 2009 had positive tests at the 1.25 MG storage tank, Cotchpinicut and its upstream and downstream sites and Vineyard Ave. and its downstream site.
- In response to the positive samples we isolated the 1.25 MG storage tank and drained it in preparation for painting. We chlorinated the 1.35 MG tank and flushed the east side of town. Blow offs were set up at Cotchpinicut and Vineyard Ave and were run over the weekend.

- All distribution samples taken on September 21, 2009 showed no detect of coliform bacteria in any location. The situation is now resolved.

Although we cannot confirm with certainty, it is believed that the cold nights in early September caused the biofilm inside the tank to slough off into the warm water which allowed for the growth of bacteria.

For more information, please contact William Redfield, Director at (508) 945-5150 or mail at Chatham Water Department, 127 Old Harbor Road, Chatham, MA 02633.

*Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.*

This notice is being sent to you by Chatham Water Department,

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